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ABSTRACT

This study, conducted at Mississippi State University 1984-86, sought to determine the significant effect of the student teaching experience on the attitudes of physical education majors toward administrative directives. Fifty-five students were asked in what way they would comply with directives: (1) without question; (2) mentally questioning the authority of the principal to issue the directive; (3) complying, but altering the application to conform with personal convictions; and (4) refusing to comply. The pre-test was given to the subjects during the first week of the semester while they were taking block courses previous to student teaching. The post-test was given during the final week of student teaching. Items on the questionnaire were divided into two categories--those deemed to be teacher oriented, and those perceived as administrator oriented. A discussion is presented on the changes in attitude revealed by responses to the pre- and post-tests, and on the perceived narrowing of "zones of indifference" (the extent to which people will respond to orders or directives issued by authority figures), as an effect of the student teaching experience. Data on test results are presented in tables. (JD)

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EFFECTS OF STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE ON ATTITUDES TOWARD ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTIVES

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Introduction

Problems relative to working with administrators are the major issues cited by beginning teachers who drop out of the teaching profession early. We need to study these problems that may cause conflicts with beginning teachers and principals. Helping to understand these problems may be helpful in preparing these teachers to help reduce conflicts.

Authority relationships in modern societal organizations are still practiced from the traditional viewpoint. Society delegates to the controlling institution the power to structure the needed institutions that exist to provide the services perceived as being needed by society. Through this structure authority positions are created in the organizations.

The public school system as a societal institution is strongly structured with authority positions. School boards, superintendents, and principals have all been well established as positions of authority from which communications in the form of directives are issued.

Compliance with these directives is supported due to the legitimacy of position; however, the legitimization of authority does not guarantee the degree of compliance expected by administrators of the organization.

Contrary and in contrast to traditional concepts of authority, Chester Barnard described an acceptance theory of authority that results in diverse compliance behavior. As defined by Barnard, (1) authority

> "...is the character of a communication (order) in a formal organization by virtue of which it is accepted by a contributor to or 'member' of the organization as governing the action he contributes; that is, as governing or determining what he does or is not to do so far as the organization is concerned... Therefore, under this definition the decision as to whether an order has authority or not lies with the person to whom it is addressed, and does not reside in 'persons' of authority or those who issue these orders." (1)

In the explanation of and to facilitate the acceptance theory of authority, Barnard, (1) introduced the concept "zones of indifference," which describes the extent to which people will respond to orders or directives issued by authority figures. This concept suggests that some orders are clearly unacceptable, while some would be somewhat neutral, and others would be unquestionably acceptable. With regard to this concept it is further suggested that this "zone of indifference" will be wider or narrower with different individuals within the organization. This concept suggests that the difference in the zone size is created by the degree to which the inducements exceed the consequences which determines the individual's adhesion to the organization.

Other researchers have investigated the concept of the "zone of indifference," but from a position frame of reference. Fielder, (2) Simon, (6) and Kinz, (3) utilized this concept in writing and research but in doing so used the term "zone of acceptance" to avoid a negative connotation.

These earlier writings occurred during periods before administrator-teacher relationships have grown more to an adversary

situation. It is apparent that present relationships could indicate a negative environment. Additionally, it appears that the present would be an appropriate time to use the concept "zones of indifference" with the negative connotation as a means of measuring teacher responses to administrator directives.

Problem

The problem in this study was to determine the significant effect of the student teaching experience on the attitudes of physical education majors toward administrative directives. The following questions were answered: (1) Were there significant differences in the pre-test and post-test scores on the attitudes toward administrative directives of physical education majors? (2) Were there significant differences in the change in attitude toward administrative directives of male and female physical education majors? (3) Were there significant differences in the pre-test and post-test scores on the attitudes toward administrative directives when grouped as male and female majors?

Sample

The sample was composed of all the physical education majors who were enrolled in student teaching during the academic years of 1984-85 and 1985-86 at Mississippi State University. The total sample was fifty-five, of which forty-three were male, and twelve were female.

Instrument

The instrument used was a zones of indifference instrument developed by Wilkes and Blackbourn. (7) Their procedure for developing this instrument is described briefly as follows:

One hundred twenty-five teachers were requested to submit two typical directives issued by their supervising administrator that would fit into the following categories:

1. Those you comply with without question;
2. Those you comply with but mentally question the authority of the principal to issue;
3. Those directives issued by the principal that you mentally question the authority of, but alter the application more in keeping with what you think should be done; and
4. Those directives issued by the principal that you question mentally and refuse compliance with unless forced to do so.

Upon receipt of the suggested items by categories, duplicate and similar items were combined and refined. From the process the total of all suggested items were reduced to seventy-eight useable items. The items were placed in the suggested categories and consequently numbered. Items perceived to be teacher determined are grouped into Factor 1, and those items perceived as being administrator determined are grouped into Factor 2.

Subjects' responses on the items of the instrument were subjected to a principal component analysis. All items retained loaded

at least .40.

The Alpha coefficient measuring internal reliability of the total instrument was .95.

Collection of Data

The pre-test was administered to the subjects during the first week of the semester while they were taking their block courses previous to the student teaching experience. The post-test was administered during the final week of the student teaching experience.

Treatment of Data

The "t" test for non-independent samples and analysis of covariance were used to test the hypotheses at the .05 level of significance.

Results

Results of the study for Hypothesis (1) which stated that there were no significant differences in the pre-test and post-test scores on the attitudes toward administrative directives of physical education majors showed no significant differences. The means for both Factor 1 and Factor 2 showed a more narrow zone of indifference on the post-test with Factor 1 having the greater gain. These results are shown in Table I.

Table I

Results of Pre-test and Post-Test Scores

Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	Difference	t Value	Probability
Fac 1 Post	55	90.49	16.47	3.29	1.53	.13
Fac 1 Pre		93.78	15.94			
Fac 2 Post	55	59.00	13.99	.61	.32	.75
Fac 2 Pre		59.61	10.05			

Results for Hypothesis (2), which stated there was no significant change in attitude toward administrative directives, showed a significant change by the females on Factor 2. No other significant changes were found. These results are shown in Table II.

Table II

Differences in Changes of Males vs. Females on Attitudes Toward Directives

	Male Adjusted Means	Female Adjusted Means	F Ratio
Factor 1	91.33	87.46	.69
Factor 2	61.46	50.18	7.56 *

* Significant at .05 level

Results for Hypothesis (3) which stated that there were no significant differences in the pre-test and post-test scores on the attitudes toward administrative directives when grouped as male and female, showed a significant difference for the females on Factor 2.

The zone of indifference got more narrow on the directives that are seen to be administratively determined. These results are shown in Table III.

Table III

Differences in Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores When Grouped as Male and Female

		N	Mean	S.D.	t Value	Probability
			Males			
Factor 1	Post	43	91.14	16.56	.90	.37
	Pre		93.42	16.55		
Factor 2	Post	43	61.49	13.93	.83	.41
	Pre		59.68	10.34		
			Females			
Factor 1	Post	12	88.17	16.68	1.82	.09
	Pre		95.08	14.13		
Factor 2	Post	12	50.08	10.43	3.08	.01 *
	Pre		59.41	9.38		

* Significant at .01 level

Summary and Conclusions

The problem in this study was to determine the significant effect of the student teaching experience on the attitudes toward administrative directives of physical education majors. The following questions were answered: (1) Were there significant differences in the pre-test and post-test scores on the attitudes toward administrative directives of physical education majors? (2) Were there

significant differences in the change in attitude toward administrative directives of male and female physical education majors? (3) Were there significant differences in the pre-test and post-test scores on the attitudes toward administrative directives when grouped as male and female?

The test used was zones of indifference instrument with directives d to be teacher oriented (Factor 1) and directives tha to be administrator oriented (Factor 2). The sample was compo fifty-five physical education majors who did their student teaching during the academic years of 1984-85 and 1985-86. There were forty-three males and twelve females. The instrument was administered to the subjects prior to the beginning of the student teaching experience and was asministered again during the last week of student teaching. The "t" test for non-independent samples and analysis of covariance were used to test the hypotheses at the .05 level of significance.

Results were as follows: For Hypothesis (1) there were no significant differences in the pre-test and post-test scores on the attitudes toward administrative directives of physical education majors. For Hypothesis (2) there was a significant change in attitude toward the directives by the female group on Factor 2. No other significant changes were noted. For Hypothesis (3) there were significant differences in the pre-test and post-test scores of the females on Factor 2 which were the directives deemed to be administrator oriented. The zone of indifference got more narrow as an effect of the student teaching experience.

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